AN

ACCOUNT

OF THE

FIRST SETTLEMENT OF THE TOWNSHIPS

OF

BUCKINGHAM AND SOLEBURY,

IN

BUCKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA,

WITH REMARKS ON

THE ADVANCE OF IMPROVEMENTS IN AGRICULTURE, ETC.

AND

THE STATE OF MANNERS IN SOCIETY AT DIFFERENT PERIODS; INTERSPERSED WITH NAMES OF THE FIRST SETTLERS, REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES, ANECDOTES, ETC.

THE WHOLE INTENDED AS A CHARACTERISTIC COMPARISON OF ONE ERA WITH ANOTHER, AND TO PRESERVE SOME KNOWLEDGE OF OUR FOREFATHERS, IN THEIR PROGRESS IN SETTLING AND IMPROVING A WILDERNESS COUNTRY.

BY DR. JOHN WATSON.

MDCCCIV.

Communicated by Mr. Isaac Comly, of Byberry, Bucks County, at a Meeting of the Council, on the 19th of April, 1826.

FIRST SETTLEMENT

OF

BUCKINGHAM AND SOLEBURY.

THE township of Buckingham, situate near the centre of the County of Bucks, is the largest township in the county, containing 18,488 acres.

Solebury lies between Buckingham and the river Delaware, and contains 14,073 acres.

The whole of the two townships in early time was called Buckingham, being a favorite name with our first worthy proprietor, *William Penn*. The name was first given to the township and borough now called Bristol, but transferred here perhaps about the year ——, before Cutler's resurvey; by which it appears, that the two townships were divided by a northwest line from the lower corner of Thomas and John Bye's tract, extending to the upper corner of Randal Blackshire's tract.

John Cutler,* in the draught from which the preceding

* John Cutler, with his brother, Edmund Cutler, and Isabella, his wife, arrived in the Ship "Rebecka, of Liverpoole," the 31st of 8th

is taken, has noted that four perches in breadth were left between the opposite surveys, for a public street or road, being on the northeast of the township of Buckingham, and on the southwest of the township of Solebury. It appears probable that it was designed that every purchaser should have the advantage of a road on one side of his survey; and therefore they were laid out answering to each other, about three hundred and twenty perches in width on each side of the township line, and one range further in Solebury.

It appears, by an enumeration of the inhabitants taken in 1787, that Buckingham contained 173 dwelling-houses, 188 out-houses, 1173 white inhabitants, and 13 blacks. Solebury, 166 dwelling-houses, 150 out-houses, 928 white inhabitants, and no blacks.

In the township of Buckingham, a fine stream of water, arising from numerous small springs in the gritland above York Road; and some larger supplies, from the limestone land below, unites its several branches, and, running through the southwest end of Wrightstown, falls into the Neshamony. The Indian name of this stream was Lahas-

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month, 1685. They were from "*Slateburn in Bowland, Yorkshire*," England.

John does not appear to have been married at the time of his arrival.

The children of Edmund were Elizabeth, born the 14th, 3d mo., 1680,—Thomas, 16th, 9th mo., 1681,—William, 16th, 10th mo., 1682. (Bucks County Registry of Arrivals, Doylestown.)

SLAITBURN or Slandburn (York W. R.), not far from Barnesley, anciently belonged to the Lacies, Es. of Lincoln, &c., &c.—"England's Gazeteer," London, 1751.—EDITOR.

kekee or Lahaskeek. The white people called it Randall's Run; and a south branch, Roberts' Run.

Two rocky ridges of the same Indian name run parallel to each other, and about eighty perches apart, on the southwest side of the creek. Between these hills and the stream, there is a piece of fine land, of a soil black, light, and sandy, which probably was once an Indian settlement. In 1769, a white-oak tree was cut on this land, in which there were several large marks of an axe; which showed by the years' growths, that it had been done near fifty years before the grant of the province to William Penn. I have seen the form of a hawk or eagle cut in the bark of a white-oak by the Indians not far distant.

The stone on these hills is a kind of hard sandy flint, and a bed of limestone deep underneath.

The same ridge rises again about eighty perches on the southeast of the creek, and extends nearly northeast, inclining to the east, three miles, to near Buckingham line. This hill is much higher than the others; the stone and soil the same, and the Indian name the same. After a small interval of about eighty perches, broken and irregular hills continue to the river, winding in their direction rather more eastwardly, and of an entirely different kind of stone, being a hard ochre or bluish rock, inclining to a round form, but very unshapely for building. On the southeast side of these hills rise those fine springs of water that form the source of Pidcock's Creek.

James Letch, who formerly travelled on foot to Long Island, traced this chain of broken hills throughout his

journey; and it is remarkable that they form the first rocky ridge from the seashore.

A certain Doctor Bowman, being of a contemplative turn of mind, in the early settlement, used to frequent the fine round top of one of these hills near the river; and, at his request, he was buried there. It is since been called Bowman's Hill. Many others have been buried at the same place. Bowman's Hill is directly opposite to another on the Jersey shore called Belmount, of the same height, form, and direction; and they appear to have been separated by the river Delaware. This appears evident at a distant observation, and is fully confirmed by examining the ends of the hills.

The broken hills near the river, in the upper end of Solebury, are cut into deep winding hollows by streams of water. In these banks, and around in the neighborhood, are great abundance of good building stone, splitting and dressing well, of a finer or coarser grained grit, and of different colors. Some are a mixture of coarse sand and pebbles. All these kinds of stone, on a somewhat sandy soil, are common in the upper part of both townships.

In the hills near Howell's Ferry, and thence in a southwesterly direction, through Solebury and part of Buckingham, rocks are found, very suitable for rough millstones and other uses of that kind. A narrow vein of limestone begins in Buckingham, back of the Lahaskekee Hill, and runs parallel with it, and probably under it, to the northeast end of Buckingham line, and then becomes wider in

Solebury, and divides, interspersed with other soils, to the river. In the lower part of Buckingham, the soil is a loam, blue clay, or *shell* on a shell bottom, pretty level and wet. Solebury is generally hilly, with a great variety of different soils and stones, well supplied for the most part with springs of good water, except on a piece of barrens, where there are no springs nor running water. This land, with proper management of late years, has produced good crops of grain and grass.

A very large spring rises in Solebury, called by the natives Aquetong, and by the white people Ingham's, or the Great Spring. The water flows out in a cove or hollow; the stone on the southeast being a solid red-shell, while those on the northwest are limestone. It is remarkably clear and cold in summer, and seldom freezes in winter. The quantity is supposed sufficient, with eighteen or twenty feet fall, to turn two grist-mills almost uniformly throughout the year; and there are five good sites for mill-works on the stream to where it falls into the Delaware, at Newhope or Coryell's Ferry, a distance of about three miles. It is employed, at the present time, for one paper-mill, one fulling-mill, two merchant-mills, four saw-mills, and an oil-mill.

There has been an inquiry concerning the source from which so great a quantity of water is so regularly supplied. Perhaps the most probable conjecture is, that throughout all or most part of the limestone vein, for eight or nine miles to the southwest, there are large cavities formed by the decaying of the stones; and these, in some places, having openings which admit fresh and

moist air, the extensive cold stone surface acting like a vast still, is continually dropping and running down the sides, and affording a fresh supply of water. To this may be added the water collected in ponds and limestone sinks, which are numerous.

The water may be collected in several subterraneous reservoirs or ponds, and, pouring down from the higher into the lower, and being confined by a vein of red-shell or some other kind of hard stone or earth, may at length flow out in one place.

To confirm this opinion, it is remarked that the water in four or five wells on T. Bye's tract, and in a sink near them, is on an exact level, and that they rise and fall together. But some difficulty arises to account for this rising and falling of the water, if there be a free vent for its discharge.

Isaac Pillars' spring discharges a lively stream, but in dry summers falls several feet, and when there are but a few gallons in the bottom, it cannot be emptied by lading out, which shows that it is supplied by a large body of water under ground.

Large's pond, on the York Road, appears to have been one of these limestone sinks. The area is about half an acre. The water never rises above a certain height, and falls in a dry summer ten or twelve feet, but is never quite dry.

A little below Coryell's Ferry, now called Newhope, the Delaware is confined between two hills. This place is called the Narrows, and the river is said to fall seven or eight feet in about half a mile. The whole channel

is full of rocks, and the water roars aloud in passing through. From hence up to Paxon's Island, there is in many places a sudden rise, ten or twelve feet high, called the Boother Bank. This has doubtless, at some time, been the bank of the river; but if, at some distant period, the water of the river Delaware flowed over the top of Bowman's Hill (which is probable), this small alteration in its course must have happened long since, perhaps at the time of some great fresh.

It is also supposed that the Delaware once flowed over the top of the Blue Mountain, and that there was a great lake on the north side of it; that the fall of a great southerly storm of rain, at the breaking up of winter, and melting of a deep snow, has so raised the waters that the obstruction of the water gap at the mountain was suddenly borne away, causing a vast rise of the waters below and producing proportionable effects. Probably the obstruction at Solebury and other places above were then worn down and carried away. It is certain that large pieces of limestone and other stone are now found along the shore, that have been washed down a great distance. Different kinds of stone, by continual rolling and wearing, have become smooth and round, and are called boothers. The continual washing away of the earth by the fall of rains and flowing of streams, has caused the winding hollows and general inequalities that now appear, at least this broken roughness must be now much greater than it was two thousand years back.

The first settlers generally came from England, and were of the middle rank, and chiefly Friends: many of

them had first settled at the Falls, but soon after removed back, as it was then called, into the woods. As they came away in the reigns of Charles, James, William, and Ann, they brought with them not only the industry, frugality, and strict domestic discipline of their education, but also a portion of those high-toned political impressions that then prevailed in England.

Friends had suffered much under the Stuarts; and though promised much by the Oliverians and a republican equality, they experienced but little relief from either. They therefore equally disliked the Presbyterians and the pretender; and were loyally attached to the Protestant succession in the house of Hanover.

Being particularly pleased with the charter of privileges formed by their great patron, William Penn, they naturally esteemed it a kind of religious duty, vigilantly to guard against anything that might tend to a violation of so valuable an acquisition, which at once secured civil and religious liberty. The principles of government having been warmly discussed for some time back in the mother country, the subject had become familiar to common capacities; and politics were frequently a topic of fireside conversation, in which the newly installed freemen felt themselves deeply interested.

From this remote cause, perhaps, has originated, in part, the zealous energy of party spirit at the present time. Many of the early settlers of Buckingham and Solebury had been educated in what may, with some propriety, be termed good style; and though not great scholars, yet were great men. The exercise of their per-

sonal and mental abilities were excited into a high flow of energy by the bold enterprise of settling a new country, under so many novel circumstances, of such importance to themselves and their posterity. The women were generally good housekeepers; or at least, their industry and frugality made proper amends for whatever might be deficient, in respect to such improvements and refinements as were not so well suited to their circumstances of mediocrity and equality.

At that early period, when our forefathers were building log houses, barns, and sheds for stables, and clearing new land, and fencing it chiefly with poles or brush, it has been said that a *hearty, sincere good will* for each other generally prevailed among them. They all stood occasionally in need of the help of their neighbors, who were often situated at some distance through the woods.

Chronic ailments were not so frequent as at present; which was, perhaps, in part owing to the wholesome diet; brisk exercise, lively manners, and cheerful and unrefined state of the mind. But acute disorders, such as fevers, in various degrees — those called "long fevers, dumb agues, fever-and-agues,"—sore throats, and pleurisies were then much more common than now. The natural small-pox was peculiarly distressing — was mostly severe, and often mortal — and nothing strange that it should be so. The nature of the disorder being but little known, it was very improperly treated by the nurses, to whose care the management was chiefly committed. A hot room, plenty of bedclothes, hot teas, and milk punch, or hot tiff were pronounced most proper to bring the eruption out, and to

make it fill well; and the chief danger was apprehended from the patient taking cold by fresh air or cold drink.

This mode of ill-directed kindness produced scenes of afflicting distress; nearly whole families being ill at once. Good friends and neighbors, both men and women, collected, affording their assistance by turns, often for several weeks. Rum was esteemed absolutely necessary for the sick, and nearly as much so for the attendants. A dram, either raw, sweetened, or with wormwood or rue juice, and chewing, but more commonly smoking tobacco, were used as antidotes against infections or offensive smells. A dram or the pipe amused the vacant time, and was supposed to be useful. As money was scarce, and laborers few, and business often to be done that required many hands, friends and neighbors were commonly invited to raisings of houses and barns, grubbing, chopping, and rolling logs, that required to be done in haste to get in the crop in season. Rum and a dinner or supper were provided on these occasions; and much competition excited in the exercise of bodily strength and dexterity, both at work and athletic diversions.

Reciprocal assistance being much wanted was freely afforded and gratefully received, and notwithstanding the rude and unpolished state of mind and manners that may be expected to have prevailed in the first settlers in a wilderness country, and in a much more marked degree in those who succeeded after them, yet from their mutual wants and dependencies, the social and active vivacity of simple nature, and perhaps more than all these, from their hearty and honest zeal in a religious bias of the

mind, a kind and unaffected friendship formed a principal feature of their general character. Their equality of circumstances, similarity of views and pursuits, and union in religious and civil principles, and the acquisition of new acquaintances far from their former connexions, all tended to unite them in habits of sociability, and to form impressions of sincere regard.

When false impressions, or indeed ignorance, have once so far gained ground as to influence general habits and customs on an erroneous principle, it requires much labor, and a long time to wear them out. This appears evident in the use that is made of spirituous liquors and tobacco. It is probable the first settlers used these articles to ward off infection; and spirits principally to prevent the bad effects of drinking water, to which they had not been accustomed in Europe. They imagined the air and water of this hot climate to be unwholesome. The immediate bad effect of cold water, when heated with exercise in summer, and the fevers and agues which seized many in the autumn, confirmed them in this opinion; and not having conveniences to make beer that would keep in hot weather, they at once adopted the practice of the laboring people in the West Indies, and drank rum. This being countenanced by general opinion, and brought into general practice as far as their limited ability would admit, bottles of rum were handed about at vendues, and mixed and stewed spirits were repeatedly given to those who attended funerals —

"So fast the growth of what is surely wrong."

A concern arose among Friends on the subject, and a stop was put to this evil practice in a short time. I call it evil, because it produced effects that were hurtful in a high degree to individuals, and also to society in general.

An act of Assembly was passed, prohibiting the giving of spirits at vendues; and though the law was not much regarded for many years, and the practice continued, yet this mischievous and dishonest practice is almost wholly disused.

In early times weddings were held as festivals; probably in imitation of such a practice in England.

Relations, friends, and neighbors were generally invited, sometimes to the amount of one or two hundred; a good dinner was provided, and a lively spirit of plain friendship, but rather rude manners, prevailed in the company.

They frequently met again next day, and being mostly young people, and from under restraint, practised social plays and sports, in which they often went to an extreme of folly; but in those times such opportunities of promoting social acquaintance might be in some degree proper, though otherwise wrong.

At births many good women were collected; wine or cordial waters were esteemed suitable to the occasion for the guests: but besides these, rum, either buttered or made into hot tiff, was believed to be essentially necessary for the lying-in woman. The tender infant must be straightly rolled round the waist with a linen swathe, and loaded with clothes until he could scarcely breathe; and,

when unwell or fretful, was dosed with spirit and water stewed with spicery.

Thus it was that manners and customs were not yet reduced from the rude and unpolished practices of antiquity to the proper standard of use and propriety. A considerable degree of roughness and rusticity of mind and manners prevailed, and for some time increased in the generations that succeeded the first settlers. For this I shall call to view several reasons; first, the loose order of schools; the severe whippings and ferulings, which did not at all mend the matter; the small stock of learning obtained; but more than all, the free use of rum at vendues, at frolics, and in hay-time and harvest. On all these occasions, quarrels and fist fights frequently happened; and in the lower class of people a high degree of ignorance and want of respect due to themselves or others prevailed; so that much might be seen and heard that was *low-lived* in the full sense of the term; and this was far from being limited to persons of small property only.

When wheat and rye grew thick and tall on new land, and all was to be cut with sickles, many men and some women became dexterous in the use of them, and victory was contended for in many a violent trial; sometimes by two or three only, and sometimes by the whole company for forty or fifty perches. About the year 1744, twenty acres of wheat were cut and shocked in half a day in Solebury. Rum was drunk in proportion to the hurry of business, and long intervals of rest employed in merry and sometimes angry conversation.

The imposing authority of necessity obliged the first settlers and their successors to wear a strong and coarse kind of dress; enduring buckskin was used for breeches and sometimes for jackets; oznabrigs, made of hemp tow at 1*s.* 4*d.* per yard, was much used for boys' shirts; sometimes flax, and flax and tow were used for that purpose, and coarse tow for trowsers; a wool hat, strong shoes, and brass buckles, two linsey jackets, and a leather apron, made out the winter apparel. This kind of dress continued to be common for the laboring people until 1750.

Yet a few, even in early times, somewhat to imitate the trim of their ancestors, laid out as much to buy one suit of fine clothes as would have purchased two hundred acres of pretty good land. The cut of a fine coat (now antiquated) may be worthy of description. Three or four large plaits in the skirts — wadding almost like a coverlet to keep them smooth — cuffs vastly large up to the elbows, open below, and of a round form. The hat of a beau was a good broad-brimmed beaver, with double loops, drawn nearly close behind, and half raised on each side. The women in full mode wore stiff whalebone stays, worth eight or ten dollars. The silk gown much plaited in the back; the sleeves nearly twice as large as the arm, and reaching rather more than half way from the shoulder to the elbow — the interval covered with a fine holland sleeve, nicely plaited, locket buttons, and long-armed gloves. Invention had then reached no farther than a bath bonnet with a cape.

Something like this was the fashion of gay people, of

whom there were a few, though not many in early times, in Buckingham and Solebury. But the whole, or something like it, was often put on for wedding suits, with the addition of the bride being dressed in a long black hood without a bonnet. There was one of these solemn symbols of matrimony made of near two yards of rich black Paduasoy, that was lent to be worn on those occasions, and continued sometimes in use, down to my remembrance. Several of these odd fashions were retained, because *old*, and gradually gave way to those that were new. The straw plat, called the bee-hive bonnet, and the blue or green apron, were long worn by old women.

Notwithstanding the antique and rough dresses and unimproved habits and manners that obtained among the early settlers, yet an honest candid intention, a frank sincerity, and a good degree of zeal and energy in adhering to religious and civil principles and duties, generally prevailed among the more substantial part of them.

The careful housewifery and strict domestic discipline of many honorable mothers, has had an influential effect down to the present time: so that whatever there may have been or that now remains as valuable traits of character, in the inhabitants of these parts of the country, is chiefly owing to the virtues of the first settlers, especially in those families (which are many) who remain to the present time.

The first surveys in what was then called Buckingham were as early as 168–, and the greater part were located before 1703. It is now not easy to ascertain who made the first improvement; but most probably, from circum-

stances, it was Thomas and John Bye; and George Pownall,* Edward, Henry, and Roger Hartley, Doctor Streper, and William Cooper, came early; Richard Burgess, John Scarbrough, grandfather of the preacher of that name, and Henry Paxon,† were also early settlers. John and Richard Lundy,‡ John Large, and James Lenox, and William Lacey, John Worstell, Jacob Holcomb, Joseph Linton, Joseph Fell, Matthew Hughes, Hugh Ely, and perhaps Richard Norton, came from Long Island about 1705.

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* George Pownall, with Eleanor, his wife, and children, Reuben, Elizabeth, Sarah, Rachel, and Abigail, arrived in the Ship "Friends' Adventure," 28th, 7th mo., 1682. They were from Loylock, in the County of Chester, England.—*Bucks County Registry of Arrivals.*

The same records registers the birth of a son of George and Eleanor .Pownall, 11th of 9th mo., 1682, and the death of George Pownall previously, on the 30th of 8th mo., 1682.

There may be an error in the Registry, and 9th month may have been intended for 7th, and the record refer to the same individual; or the George named in the text may have been the person whose birth is recorded, and the record of death that of his father, who arrived in 1682.—EDITOR.

† "Henry Paxon, of "Bycot House, in the Parish of Stow," "in the County of Oxford," England, aged about twenty-seven years, came in the Ship 'The Samuel, of London,' and arrived middle of 7th mo., 1682;" his wife, brother Thomas, and son Henry, died at sea; his daughter Elizabeth, born about 5th of 9th mo., 1675, survived. He appears, on 13th of 6th mo., to have married Margery Plumley, of "Neshaminey Creek." *Registry of Arrivals.*—EDITOR.

‡ Richard Lundy, of Axminster, Devonshire, England, son of Sylvester Lundy, of same town, originally came to Boston, N. E., 6th mo., 1676; thence to Pennsylvania, 19th of 3d mo., 1682. He married, 24th of 6th mo., 1684, Elizabeth, daughter of William Bennet, of Longford, Co. Middlesex, England, who arrived 8th mo., 1683. He is styled of "Glasenbery, Co. Bucks," Pennsylvania.—*Registry of Arrivals.*—EDITOR

The first adventurers were chiefly members of the Falls Meeting; and are said to have frequently attended it, and often on foot. In the year 1700, leave was granted by the Quarterly Meeting to hold a meeting for worship at Buckingham, which was first at the house of William Cooper (now John Gillingham's). They soon after removed to the house of James Steiper (now Benjamin Williams'); and in that time, and for some time after, some of those who died in the new settlement were buried on his land, I believe near the line in the old orchard,—others were taken to the Falls or Middletown. In a short time, they removed again, and held a meeting at Nathaniel Bye's, where his grandson, Thomas Bye, now lives.

Doctor James Streiper then made a deed in trust to several Friends for ten acres of land to build a meeting-house on, and for a burying-ground, with privilege of roads five several ways or directions through his tract to go to it; and on a clear grassy spot, on the west side of a path or road that went winding up the hill, they built a log meeting-house, near the lower side of the present graveyard. As their numbers increased rapidly, in the year 1710 they were united with Wrightstown in holding a monthly meeting at that place; and at some time, when their log house was found to be too small, they built a frame house, a little further up. Before joining with Wrightstown (a period perhaps, with some of them, of twenty years), they are said to have been diligent in attending meetings for discipline, though at so great a distance.

It is probable that about the time of building the first house, a graveyard was fenced in near by; this place might be preferred, because clear of timber and grassy, but it was wet in winter and very unsuitable.

About 1720, Wrightstown and Buckingham were joined, to hold a monthly meeting alternately at each place; and perhaps about that time an addition of a stone house was made to the upper end of the frame building, to accommodate the women to hold their meetings of business. This arrangement continued until 1731, when a pretty large stone house was built, a little higher up the hill, and a stone addition at the upper end, one story high, for the women. Many Friends were then desirous of building on the spot where the meeting-house now stands, particularly Thomas Canby, Jun. He purchased a piece of land for the purpose of building at least on a somewhat better place than the old spot, to which the prejudices of some strongly attached them.

In this house, in 1732, Friends of Buckingham first held a separate monthly meeting, and perhaps quarterly and general meetings.

Friends at Buckingham Meeting, about that period, were greatly favored with a lively flow of Gospel ministry. Jacob Holcomb, John Scarbrough,* Samuel

* "John Scarborough, of London, coachsmith, arrived in 1682, with his son John, then a youth, and settled in Middletown, Bucks County, among the first in those parts, where he remained about two years, and then embarked for his native country, having placed his son under the care of a friend, with intention to bring over his wife and family; having suffered much, by persecution for his religion, in England, being a Quaker, but he never returned. His wife, who

Eastburn, Joshua Ely, Benjamin Fell, Enoch Pearson, Edmund Kinsey, Abigail Paxson, Elizabeth Fell, Phebe Ely, formerly Phebe Smith, Jane Bradfield, Ann Scholfield, were all ministers, and all of them at the same time members of Buckingham Meeting, except Jacob Holcomb and Abigail Paxson, who were deceased before my memory: all the rest I can well remember, about 1750 and 1751. John Scarbrough was frequent and generally large in his testimonies; as was also Isaac Child, who appeared at Plumstead when quite a young man. Nathan Preston and Thomas Vickers were ministers belonging to that meeting.

In the space of time from the first improvement until 1730, perhaps a period of more than forty years, many circumstances and occurrences may be worthy of remark, and especially the difficulty of beginning in the woods. Building a house or cabin, and clearing or fencing a field to raise some grain, were the first concerns; procuring fodder for their small stocks was next to be attended to: for this purpose they cut grass in plains or swamps, often at several miles from home, stacked it up on the spot, and hauled it home in the winter.

One of the first dwelling-houses yet remains in Abra-

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was not a Quaker, being unwilling to leave her native country, and persecution beginning to cease, he afterwards gave his possessions in Pennsylvania to his son, whom he had left in the province with a strict charge, when it should be in his power, to be kind to the poor Indians, for the favors he had received from them: which his son faithfully observed and complied with, and is said to have been a worthy man and a good character." Proud, Vol. I., p. 222, 223.—EDITOR.

ham Paxson's yard on the tract called William Croasdale's,* now Henry Paxson's. It is made of stone, and is dug into the earth, where there is a moderate descent, about twenty feet by ten or twelve. At the end fronting the southeast was a door leading into the dwelling-room for the whole family, where there was a sort of chimney; and a door at the other end, also level with the ground, led into the loft, which must have been the lodging-room.

Until a sufficient quantity of grain was raised for themselves and the new-comers, all further supply had to be brought from the Falls or Middletown; and, until 1707, all the grain had to be taken there or to Morris Gwin's, on Pennepack below the Billet, to be ground. In that year, Robert Heath built a grist-mill on the great spring stream in Solebury. This must have been a great hardship,—to go so far to mill for more than seventeen years, and chiefly on horseback. It was some time that they had to go the same distance with their plough-irons and other smithwork. Horses were seldom shod; and blocks to pound hominy were a useful invention borrowed from the natives. After all their care and industry to provide for the winter, they must have struggled with many difficulties and suffered much hardship in passing over that tedious and rigorous season, when the snow was generally deep, and the winds piercing cold.

In 1690, there were many settlements of Indians in

* William and John Croasdale were the sons of Thomas and Agnes Croasdale. Thomas died in 1684, and Agnes in 1686.—*Registry of Arrivals.*—EDITOR.

these townships,—one on the lowland near the river, on George Pownall's tract, which remained for some time after he settled there,—one on James Streiper's tract, near Conkey Hole,—one on land since Samuel Harold's, —one on Joseph Fell's tract,—and one at the great spring, &c.

Tradition reports that they were kind neighbors, supplying the white people with meat, and sometimes with beans and other vegetables, which they did in perfect charity, bringing presents to their houses, and refusing pay. Their children were sociable and fond of play. A harmony arose out of their mutual intercourse and dependence. Native simplicity reigned in its greatest extent. The difference between the families of the white man and the Indian, in many respects, was not great,—when to live was the utmost hope, and to enjoy a bare sufficiency the greatest luxury.

About 1704, several new settlers arrived; among whom was my great-grandfather, Thomas Watson. His certificate is from Pardsey Cragg, in Cumberland, G. B., dated 23d, 7th mo., 1701. His wife was Eleanor Pearson, of Probank, in Yorkshire, and their two sons, Thomas and John. He first settled at a place then called Moncy Hill, near Bristol; and settled finally, about 1703 or 1704, on Rosill's four hundred acres, in Buckingham.

About the same, came Joseph Fell, —— Linton, Matthew Hughes, John Hill, Ephraim Fenton, Isaac Pennington, and —— Pickering.

Thomas Canby, for several reasons, appears to deserve especial notice. His mother's brother, Samuel Baker, was

one of the early adventurers; and soon after, returning to England, brought his nephew, Thomas Canby, then a lad, over with him. Being an orphan, his uncle became his guardian. He was bound by indenture to serve with him; in which they took the advice of the Quarterly Meeting. After he was free, he married and settled near Robert Fletcher's, in Abington. His first wife died, and he married a second wife. By these wives he had four sons and eleven daughters. The sons were Thomas, Benjamin, Oliver, and Joseph, who died in his minority. Several of the daughters married as follows:

Sarah, to John Hill; Esther, to —— Stapler, afterwards to John White; Phebe, to Robert Smith, afterwards to Hugh Ely; Elizabeth, to Thomas Lacey; Mary, to Joseph Hamton; Rebecca, to Samuel Wilson; Jane, to Thomas Paxson; Martha, to James Gillingham, afterwards to Joseph Duer; Lydia, to John Johnson. Ann and Rachel died single.

Thomas Canby removed and settled on a part of Lundy's tract in Buckingham, on which he built a stone house one story high, with a hip roof, now belonging to Joshua Anderson. This he sold to Samuel Blaker, and purchased Scarbrough's tract in Solebury, where his two sons, Thomas and Benjamin, built houses, having purchased of their father. This now belongs to Matthias Hutchinson and John Scarbrough.

Thomas himself removed to Heath's mill, which he purchased in company with Anthony Morris of Philadelphia. Here he married a third wife, and for some time carried on business at the mill. His son, Oliver Canby,

having that land and stream where the Brandywine mills are now erected, the old man removed there also; but returned back, and died at Solebury in the year 1742.

He was a lively, active man, of plain, sound understanding, a good constitution, and qualified to carry on business with spirit. He maintained a strict discipline in his family; and it is remarkable, that nearly all his children were happily matched, and that many reputable families have sprung from him as an original ancestor.

My great-grandfather, Thomas Watson, followed malting in England; but from original curiosity in his mind, he became acquainted with several of the books which were then in request in surgery, physic, and chemistry, and settling here, where no practitioner resided for many miles, he by degrees became in high esteem as a doctor. It is reported that he was very successful in setting broken bones, and curing scald heads, old ulcers, and disorders in general. He was the original inventor of the spicy anodyne called Watson's black drops, which is an excellent medicine. After his decease, which I suppose was in 1731 or 1732, his son, John Watson, with much better opportunity of acquiring medical knowledge, took his father's place as the only doctor for twenty miles in every direction. He was much improved by an intimate acquaintance with Doctors Bond, Jones, Kearsley, Owen, and others, during sixteen years of his attendance as a member of Assembly at Philadelphia. He was possessed of an uncommonly sociable disposition and strong powers of mind; he pursued a rational method, and was very successful in his practice. He died in 1760.

Thomas Watson, eldest son of Thomas Watson, died before his father; leaving several children, who all died young, except John and Sarah. John Watson was sent to school, and procured a greater stock of learning than was common in those times. He became the deputy surveyor in this county, and by the force of a suitable docility of mind and quickness of perception, rather than from constant application, he acquired among learned men the character of a great scholar. At the time of his decease, which was in 1761, he was employed in company with Purdie and Dixon in running the line between Pennsylvania and Maryland. Being seized with the influenza, and having taken cold while in a fever, and in extremely hot weather he rode upwards of sixty miles in a day to William Blackfan's, where he died.

Henry Paxson, not the same who is marked as a first purchaser also, but perhaps his brother's son, was an early inhabitant (in 1729 or sooner). He had a large family of children, two sons, and eight daughters, who married to the following persons, to wit —

Thomas Hartley, Matthew Beans, Henry Roberts, D. Doan, Joseph Duer, Timothy Beans, Jonas Preston, Thomas Paxson. His sons were Henry and Thomas.

Samuel Wilson married Rebecca Canby; they had fourteen children, one died young; six sons and seven daughters. The daughters married as follows:

Joseph Eastburn, Jonathan Fell, Hugh Ely, Joseph Fell, Robert Kirkbride, Joshua Morris.

These examples show what a great number of the present inhabitants have arisen from a few original stocks.

Samuel Wilson's children have all been married, and are all living, except Thomas.

While the land was fresh and new, it produced good crops of wheat and rye; from fifteen to twenty-five or thirty bushels per acre.

It appears in an old account book of my grandfather, Richard Mitchel's, who had a grist-mill and store in Wright's town, from 1724 to 1735, that his charges are as follows: wheat, from 3*s.* to 4*s.*; rye, one shilling less; Indian corn and buckwheat, 2*s.*; middlings, fine, 7*s.* and 8*s.*; coarse, 4*s.* 6*d.*; bran, 1*s.*; salt, 4*s.*; beef, 2*d.*; bacon, 4*d.*; pork was about 2*d.*

Improved land was sold generally by the acre, at the price of twenty bushels of wheat. Thus, wheat, 2*s.* 6*d.*, land, 2*l.* 10*s.*; wheat, 3*s.*, land, 3*l.*; wheat, 3*s.* 6*d.*, land, 3*l.* 10*s.*; wheat, 5*s.*, land, 5*l.*; wheat, 7*s.* 6*d.*, land, 7*l.* 10*s.*; wheat, 10*s.*, land, 10*l.* When provender could be procured to keep stock through the winter, milk, butter, and cheese became plenty for domestic use. Swine were easily raised and fattened. Deer, turkeys, and other small game, made a plentiful supply of excellent provision in their season. Roast venison and stew-pies were luxurious dishes, which the hunter and his family enjoyed in their log cabins with a high degree of pleasure.

Having generally passed over the era of necessity that attended the first settlement about 1730, and for some time before, they mostly enjoyed a pretty good living, were well fed, clothed, and lodged; and though all was in the coarse way, yet their fare was wholesome and nourishing, their clothes fine enough for laboring people,

and no doubt they slept as sound on chaff beds on the floor in the loft as they could have done with all the finery that the inventions of later days have introduced. The domestic management that fell to the share of the women was generally well ordered. As soon as wool and flax were raised, they manufactured good linen of different kinds and degrees of fineness, drugget, linsey, worsted, &c., sufficient to clothe themselves and families; were very industrious and frugal, and contented to live on what their present means afforded, and were generally well qualified to make the most proper use of what they had.

Notwithstanding the engagements at home, and the difficulty of travelling in those early times, yet visits of friendship were frequent, not only to relations, but others. On these occasions, cider, metheglin or small beer, toast of light biscuit made of fine wheat flour, and milk, butter, cheese, custards, pies, made an afternoon's repast. Chocolate was sometimes used, and, in lack of other materials, the toast was sometimes made with rum and water. For common living, milk and bread and pie made the breakfast, the milk being boiled, and sometimes thickened in winter; good pork or bacon, with plenty of sauce, a wheat flour pudding or dumplings, with butter and molasses, for dinner; and mush or hominy, with milk and butter and honey, for supper. Pies of green or dried apples were the universal standard of good eating, especially with children. When milk was scarce, small-beer thickened with wheat flour and an egg, or cider in that way, made an agreeable breakfast.

The new stone meeting-house being built about 1731, several stone dwelling-houses were built about that time and soon after; as Joseph Fell's, Thomas Canby's, John Watson's, Joseph Large's, and Henry Paxson's. Several frame houses were also built, enclosed with nice shaved clapboard, plastered inside. One of these yet remains standing on Thomas Watson's land, now John Lewis's. The boards for floors and partitions were all sawed by hand, and the hauling done with carts and sleds, as there were not many, if any, wagons at that early period.

Wheat was the principal article for making money. Butter, cheese, poultry, and such articles were taken to market on horseback. There were but few stores in the neighborhood, and those kept but few articles.

Most of the original tracts were settled and improved before 1720; and, in 1730, the lands up the Neshamony and in Plumstead were settled; and in New Britain by Welsh generally. Large fields were cleared and pretty well fenced; low and swampy land was cleared out for meadow; and but little seed of any kind of foreign grass was sown, as the plough was seldom used to prepare for meadow; and red and white clover were only propagated by manure after they were first somehow scattered about on the new settlement.

From 1730 to 1750, as the people were industrious, the land fresh and fertile, and seasons favorable, their labors were blessed with a plentiful increase: so that many plain dwelling-houses and good barns were built, convenient articles of household furniture were added by degrees; and by the means of productive labor,

moderate riches increased insensibly. The winter of 1740–41 was very severe. The snow was deep, and lay from the latter end of December to the fourth of March; and in the period above mentioned, there was generally more snow, and that lay longer on the ground through the winters than of latter years. Easterly storms of pretty heavy rain, lasting mostly two or three days, were also much more frequent.

Northern lights, I believe, are not so common of late years as formerly; but of this I am not certain.

Houses for keeping school in were very few, and those poor, dark, log buildings; the masters generally very unsuitable persons for the purpose; and but little learning obtained at school. Schooling was twenty shillings a year, and the master boarded with the employers.

Indian corn, not being an article of trade, was not attempted to be raised in large quantities before 1750, nor until some years after. It was dressed by ploughing and harrowing between the rows, the hills all moulded nicely with the hoe when the corn was small, and, after ploughing, hilled up again with the hoe. For wheat, open fallows were preferred, which were generally ploughed three times during the summer; but in this way, unless corn and buckwheat had preceded, the blue grass, not being killed, became injurious to the crop. Hence, what was called double cropping became common: which is sowing oats on the corn-stalk and buckwheat ground, and then sowing wheat in the fall. This practice effectually killed the grass and impoverished the land, large fields being sown and but small portions

manured. Liming answered a good purpose, which kept the soil in better heart; but, on the whole, wheat crops were on the decline, growing poorly in the fall, being eaten by lice or small flies; and, in wet land, being frozen out by the winter. Mildew and rust sometimes destroyed it near the harvest. On all these accounts, spring grain was more cultivated; and as horses, cattle, and pork, bore a better price, served in part to make up the deficiency. But the land generally suffered by a bad method of farming.

Before this time, no cross occurrence happened materially to disturb the general tranquillity; every thing, both public and private, went on in an even and regular routine; moderate wishes were fully supplied; necessaries and conveniences were gradually increased; but luxuries of any kind, except spirituous liquors, were rarely thought of, or introduced, either of apparel, household furniture, or living. Farm carts were had by the best farmers. Thomas Canby, Richard Norton, Joseph Large, Thomas Gilbert, and perhaps a few more, had wagons before 1745; and a few two-horse wagons, from then to 1750, were introduced; and some who went to market had light tongue-carts for the purpose. These were a poor make-shift, easily overset, the wild team sometimes ran away, and the gears often broke. John Wells, Esq., was the only person who ever had a riding-chair. He and Matthew Hughes were the only justices of the peace, except Thomas Canby, who held a commission for a short time; and there were no taverns in the two townships, except on the Delaware, at Howell's and

Coryell's Ferries (which was owing probably to the disposition and manners of the inhabitants), and but one distillery a short time.

The preceding account will apply with general propriety to the state of things until 1754, when a war began between England and France, concerning lands on the west and northwest of Pennsylvania. Colonel Washington was defeated and taken prisoner on Wills's Creek; and, in the ensuing summer General Braddock was defeated and killed in that country. When the Indians attacked the frontiers of this province, four or five hundred thousand pounds were granted in a few years for the king's use; money was also sent in from England to purchase provisions, and in general the war introduced a more plentiful supply of cash. Trade and improvements were proportionably advanced; the price of all kinds of produce was increased, wheat was from six shillings to a dollar a bushel, and a land tax was raised to sink the debt; yet the burden was not sensibly felt, as there was such an increasing ability to bear it.

As the quantity of cash increased during the war, so also there was a much larger importation of foreign goods. Bohea tea and coffee became more used, which were not often to be found in any farmer's house before 1750. Tea, in particular, spread and prevailed almost universally. Half silks and calico were common for women's wearing; various modes of silk bonnets, silk and fine linen neckhandkerchiefs, in short, every article of women's clothing were foreign manufacture. The men wore jackets and breeches of Bengal, nankeen, fustian,

black everlasting, cotton velvet, as the fashion of the season determined the point, which changed almost every year. Household furniture was added to, both in quantity and kind; and hence began the marked distinction between rich and poor, or rather between new-fashioned and old-fashioned, which has continued increasing ever since. The first beginning was by imperceptible degrees; I believe tea and calico were the chief initiating articles. Tea was a convenient treat on an afternoon's visit, easily gotten ready at any time; and calico a light agreeable dress that would bear washing. On the whole, present calculation, on the first cast, decided against homespun of almost every kind, and in favor of foreign manufactures, which were to be had in the city or country stores so cheap and often on credit.

The subject of old and new fashion bore a considerable dispute, at least how far the new should be introduced. Some showed by their practice that they were for going as far as they could, some stopped half way, and a few, trying to hold out as long as they could, were not to be won upon by any means more likely to prevail than by the women, who had a strong aversion to appearing singular; so that at the present time, and for these twenty years past, there are but few men and fewer women left as perfect patterns of the genuine old-fashioned sort of people.

The author of the preceding relic died recently, in Bucks county, at an advanced age. He was, as may be

easily inferred from the text, one entirely unaccustomed to literary composition and of a defective education. Nevertheless, the amount of matter which the piece contains, calculated to interest either the local antiquary or the student who delights in surveying that process by which a vigorous, intelligent, and industrious population is formed, constituting the strength of such a country as America, has led the Committee of Publication to conclude on its insertion, in all the *naif* sincerity of the original.

John Watson — for he was not, as may readily be supposed, a medical graduate — was a man of unquestioned moral character. His pretensions to the Esculapian art were of that species which are elicited by necessity in a new and remote country. He spent much of his time in doing good; living upon his farm, and by no means confining his attention to the practice of medicine. His honest and well-earned reputation, as an upright citizen and a healer of differences, will long dwell in the memories of the substantial landholders of the district he describes. The Historical Society have long had it in view to collect monographic descriptions of the different counties and other important districts of our State. Besides the local interest, which, in a land where the whole population are lords, and where every plantation has been the scene of a recent and romantic adventure, must always exist to a powerful degree, such collections furnish abundant food to the philosophical politician, and a copious fund of materials to the future writer who shall prepare a historical and geographical account of our community. The

Committee earnestly hope that the example set by the publication of the foregoing will draw forth from many minds equally active with that of its author, but better furnished with the qualifications of a writer, those contributions which are desired.

*** The words *shell* and *red-shell*, presumed to be a corruption of the old mineralogical term *shale*, are familiarly used in the neighborhood to express a species of clay-slate, crumbling into small parallelopipeds.

The remarkable spring mentioned at page 291, rises in about the centre of a tract of land, containing six hundred and twelve acres, granted by the heirs of James Logan, for a Public Library. In 1792, upon the annexation of the Loganian Library to the Library Company of Philadelphia, the property became vested in the latter institution, upon the same trusts.

These lands were leased for $155.55 per annum, and the lease expiring in 1861, it was renewed for one hundred and twenty-one years, at $1022.75 per annum.—EDITOR.